Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of managing security keys generated from a tree-structured ancestral hierarchy and issued by or on behalf of a service provider in order to provide selective access to provision of a service, wherein invalidation of a key necessitates reconfiguration of each other key within the hierarchy to the extent another key and an invalidated key share common ancestry, the method comprising the steps of:

defining at least two groups of users of the service;

allocating within the hierarchy a distinct subtree for each group of users; and

issuing keys to users from subtrees within the hierarchy upon the basis of their grouping,

wherein the at least two groups of users are defined upon the basis of a predetermined policy which provides that users are grouped according to their perceived value to a provider of the service, and

wherein a first user group having the highest perceived value to the provider are allocated keys from a first subtree, and wherein keys from the first subtree share fewer ancestors with keys from other subtrees than said keys from other subtrees share with each other.

2. (Canceled).

3. (Canceled).

4. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim [[3]] 1 wherein keys from the first subtree share only one ancestor with said keys from other subtrees.

5. (Original) A method according to claim 1 wherein the ancestral hierarchy has a binary tree architecture.

6. (Currently Amended) A method ~~according to claim 1~~ of managing security keys generated from a tree-structured ancestral hierarchy and issued by or on behalf of a service provider in order to provide selective access to provision of a service, wherein invalidation of a key necessitates reconfiguration of each other key within the hierarchy to the extent another key and an invalidated key share common ancestry, the method comprising the steps of:

defining at least two groups of users of the service;

allocating within the hierarchy a distinct subtree for each group of users; and

issuing keys to users from subtrees within the hierarchy upon the basis of their grouping,

wherein the at least two groups of users are defined upon the basis of a predetermined policy which provides that users are grouped according to a perceived susceptibility of them ceasing to require the service, and a first user group having the highest perceived susceptibility are allocated keys from a first subtree, and wherein keys from the first subtree share fewer ancestors with keys from other subtrees than said keys from other subtrees share with each other.

7. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 6 wherein keys from the first subtree share only one ancestor with said keys from other subtrees.

8. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 1 wherein varying levels of service are available and a group of users of a low-service level are allocated dummy keys providing no security, thereby to obviate a need to reconfigure other user's keys upon their invalidation.

9. (Original) A method according to claim 8 wherein the service is a dynamic service and its value is ephemeral and based upon its contemporaneous nature.

10. – 14. (Canceled).